**Sino Soviet Relations in the Cold War**

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**Mao Zedong Josef Stalin Nikita Khrushchev**

**Sino v. Soviet Views of Marxism:**

**Mao’s View:**

* **Marxism means regenerate China’s greatness**
* **must interpret Marxism in Chinese way**
* **Marxist revolution can happen w/peasant population**
* **peasants can be proletariat if they have the right mindset—revolutionary**
* **NATIONALISTIC in character**
* **outside revolutionaries cold not dictate to Chinese**
* **Mao: “China’s revolutionary war is waged in the specific environment of China and so it has its own specific circumstances… Some people say it is merely enough to study the experience of revolutionary war in Russia. However, although we must value Soviet experience… we must value even more the experience of China’s revolutionary war, because there are many factors specific to the Chinese revoltion.”**

**Stalin’s View:**

* **USSR country of Lenin & Stalin**
* **only true interpreter of communist faith**
* **Stalin believed Mao bastardized Marxist dialectic w/peasant emphasis—threatened communism worldwide; revolution had to be urban & proletariat**
* **true voice of international Marxism**

**Mao’s View:**

* **Mao suspected Soviets wanted to divide China leaving USSR as dominant in Asia**
* **USSR motivated by nationalism, not communism**

**Stalin v. Mao**

**Stalin:**

* **Jan. 1949: Stalin beginning to see Mao as potential ally (Chinese Civil War still going)**
* **hosted CCP to visit Moscow (after Lean-to-One-Side, see below)**
* **invited them to sit in session of Politburo—implies sense of equality**
* **Stalin believed in hierarchy of authority in communist world**
* **Chinese leaders of revolutionary process in Asia**
* **USSR would keep interests in China—Manchuria, Port Arthur & Xinjiang**
* **USSR as big brother to China’s little brother**
* **Mao invited to Moscow after victory in civil war (Dec. 1949)**
* **rejected Mao’s concern of war w/USA**
* **acknowledged current Sino-Soviet Treaty signed w/Chiang & western allies in 1945—Cold War politics in Europe a factor**
* **Stalin did not trust Mao—another potential Tito**

**Mao:**

* **suspicious of Stalin’s motives**
* **offended by Stalin’s & Soviet’s superior attitudes**
* **claimed Stalin was reluctant to meet w/him (Soviet documents indicate otherwise)**
* **Sino-centric view of Marxism**
* **worried about possible US intervention in China**
* **needed to complete the revolution by attacking the “old” traditions and ways of thinking in China w/the “new” communist, modern ideas; create sense of hopelessness inside China that western powers might come to rid China of communism**
* **Lean-to-One-Side:**

**June 1949 Mao announced special relationship w/USSR: China’s revolution must ‘’unite in a common struggle with those nations of the world that treat us as equal and unite with the peoples of all countries—that is, ally ourselves with the Soviet Union, with the People’s Democratic Countries [eastern European countries], and with the proletariat and broad masses of the people in all other countries, and form an international united front… We must *lean to one side*.’”[[1]](#footnote-1)[emphasis added]**

**Sino-Soviet Treaty 1950**

* **“friendship and equality”**
* **“economic and cultural co-operation”**
* **$300 million in aid… in fact was a loan requiring PRC to fully repay**
* **received military support and materiel, including air-defense for coastal areas of China**
* **asked USSR to keep soldiers in Port Arthur: counter potential American-Japanese threat & as training base for Chinese Navy**
* **allowed to maintain privileges in China’s northeastern areas**
* **cost of Soviet military in China paid by PRC, including future military assistance in Korean War**
* **Stalin got the better part of the deal**

**Stalin v. Mao Clash of Personalities would influence Sino-Soviet relations until his death in 1953**

**Korean War:**

* **Stalin initially reluctant to support Kim Il-Sung**
* **Acheson’s Perimeter Defense Speech—Stalin certain no US intervention**
* **Mao shared the same view of USA—influenced Stalin’s decision to okay Kim’s invasion**
* **Summer 1949-Spring 1950: Mao sent as many as 70,000 Korean PLA (Chinese Red Army) soldiers back to Korea—further show of support for Kim**
* **further preparation supported by Stalin**
* **Stalin: American invasion of Inchon possibility of direct confrontation w/USA & USSR**
* **Stalin further asked for Mao to take action**
* **Debate among Chinese leadership whether to risk war w/USA**
* **serious test of Sin-Soviet relations**
* **Mini-version of Communist Domino Theory used by Stalin**
* **China entered the war: 1) defensive measure; 2) resolve to fight imperialists; 3) solidarity of communism; and 4) ASSUMED USSR would HONOR its obligations in the Sino-Soviet Treaty**

**Strengthened Relations:**

* **Stalin confidence in Mao ↑**
* **↑support from USSR: military, economic & technological**

**Weakened Relations:**

* **Stalin’s refusal for air support in early stages of war**
* **Stalin wanted China to pay for all of its assistance and materiel**
* **Stalin seen as more concerned w/his own needs not international revolution**
* **Mao & Chinese leaders develop sense of moral superiority**
* **wanted to begin armistice negotiations—Stalin refused… Chinese were doing the fighting**
* **US saw Sino-Soviet bloc determined on world conquest: massive ↑ in military build-up**
* **allowed USA to sign a treaty w/Japan w/o Soviet participation—led to a Japanese-American alliance in Asia**
* **gave impetus to re-arming of West Germany in Europe**

**Communist Revolution Tensions**

* **Soviets played leading role—superpower**
* **1st Communist state**
* **fought Nazis**
* **Cold War**
* **Chinese wanted to play a world role**
* **after Stalin’s death, Mao saw himself as elder statesmen & natural leader of communist movement—especially did not like Khrushchev being in a higher position**
* **Mao & Chinese acting w/moral superiority**

**The Break**

* **1956: Khrushchev’s 20th Congress Speech & De-Stalinization Policy**
* **Khrushchev’s Peaceful Cooperation**
* **1956: Polish & Hungarian Revolts**
* **Mao’s Anti-Rightest Movement**
* **1958: Second Taiwan Crisis**
* **Soviets End Atomic Assistance to China**

**Khrushchev & De-Stalinization (1956)**

* **initially Stalin’s death led to ↑ in Sino-Soviet relations**
* **1956: Khrushchev denounced Stalin as hurting the USSR & putting himself above the party w/use of cult of personality**
* **worried Mao because had used Stalin as model—own cult of personality… was he being attacked as well?**
* **Khrushchev’s policy of “national ways to socialism—gave more freedom & independence to countries in Communist Bloc**
* **Mao saw this as opportunity for criticism w/in country & of Moscow**
* **Mao began asserting himself in communist circles & congresses-admitted Stalin made mistakes, but that was all they were mistakes, not crimes—Stalin had many achievements**

**Peaceful Co-Existence**

* **idea that war not inevitable between USSR & West**
* **Mao saw sign of weakness to West**
* **Khrushchev: age of nuclear weapons idea of violent conflict w/capitalist unthinkable—Lenin would have adjusted his views if alive**
* **Mao saw this notion as heresy**
* **Mao final conflict unavoidable**
* **Mao: must prepare for the final conflict & speed it up**

**Mao saw Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization as a revisionist & heretical path**

**Uprisings in Poland (1956) & Hungary (1956)**

* **Mao saw these as a result of weakness in Khrushchev & Soviet Union**
* **due to relaxing of ideological & power grip**
* **angry failure of Khrushchev & post-Stalinists to control reactionary factions w/in Communist Bloc**
* **Mao saw Poland & Hungary as two different problems—Poland = anti-Soviet; Hungary = anti-Communist**

**Poland:**

* **Mao did not support Soviet intentions to militarily intervene in Poland**
* **saw this possibility as Soviet interference in Polish domestic affairs**
* **Soviets saw possibility that Poles would seek independence from Soviet bloc**
* **Mao threatened making disagreement public**
* **Soviets issued “Declaration on Developing and Enhancing the Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and other Socialist Countries”**
* **Mao saw this as a victory**
* **Soviets had bigger problems in Hungary—received Polish assurances remain in Warsaw Pact**

**Hungary:**

* **initially thought Hungary was reacting to unfair treatment by USSR**
* **changed when anti-Communist revolts spread across Hungary—wanted a harsh response**
* **USSR had issued “Declaration on Developing and Enhancing the Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and other Socialist Countries”**
* **Khrushchev trying to live by his declaration to give more freedom to satellites**
* **USSR even began to ↓ military in Hungary**
* **Mao & Chinese leaders decided to oppose Soviet abandonment of Hungary to what they saw as reactionary forces out to destroy the communist revolution**
* **Chinese inform Soviets that withdrawal from Hungary would betray Hungarians & make Soviets “’historical criminals”[[2]](#footnote-2)**
* **Soviets responded with military intervention—due more to situation in eastern Europe & Suez Crisis than to pressure from Mao**
* **Chinese saw themselves as important to the correct resolution of the revolts—increased their sense of moral superiority & sense of being world leaders of communism**

**Mao’s Anti-Rightest Movement**

* **beginning of Mao’s plan to purify the CCP-influenced by events in Poland & Hungary**
* **Anti-Rightest = anyone who challenged the ideology of Marxism as pronounced by and acted out by Lenin & Stalin—implied Khrushchev though movement mostly focused inside China**
* **Mao openly criticized those against the “’The Sword of Lenin’” & “’The Sword of Stalin’”[[3]](#footnote-3)**
* **Khrushchev had denounced Stalin in 1956 speech to the 20th Part Congress—started de-Stalinization**
* **Khrushchev was developing his policy of Peaceful Coexistence**
* **Nov 1957: in Moscow to celebrate 40th anniversary of Bolshevik Revolution—Mao declared that Communist should not be frightened of nuclear war w/West… such a war would have a huge price but would lead to end of imperialist system**
* **deliberate challenge to Khrushchev’s Peaceful Coexistence**
* **Led to his Great Leap Forward & 100 Flowers Campaign**
* **Soviets critical of both policies**
* **tensions between USSR & PRC increasing throughout 1957—to outsiders this was not obvious nor even apparent**

**Second Taiwan Crisis (1958)**

**foundation of tensions to crisis:**

* **disagreement about radio transmitters for Russian & Chinese submarines—Chinese coastline**
* **USSR offered to pay 70% of cost of construction**
* **Mao refused & wanted China pay the whole cost—give China total ownership of transmitters**
* **USSR & PRC problems over issue of joint-submarine fleet**
* **Soviets proposed creating a joint submarine fleet**
* **Mao showed no interest in such a project of military cooperation**
* **Mao claimed the transmitters & join submarine fleet was Soviet attempt to gain control over China—big power chauvinism of the Soviets**
* **eventually agreement to construct some transmitter reached**
* **psychological impact was long-lasting & troubling**
* **Mao: “’the overturning of [our relations with] the Soviet Union occurred in 1958; that was because they wanted to control China militarily.’”[[4]](#footnote-4)**

**The Crisis:**

* **23 Aug. 1958: PRC forces begin artillery fire on Taiwanese islands of Quemoy & Matsu**
* **Mao suggested that Soviets would support China with its nuclear arsenal**
* **Dulles: US views actions as first stage of attack**
* **US 7th Fleet moved into the straits; other US forces in Asia put on alert**
* **Dulles issued a veiled threat of nuclear strikes**
* **possibility of negotiations also offered—accepted by Chinese**

**Why did the Second Taiwan Crisis happen?**

* **Mao initially claimed move to reunify China & eliminate Chiang Kaishek**
* **later Mao claimed shelling of the islands was a response to Khrushchev’s détente (peaceful coexistence) w/ USA**
* **Zhou Enlai told Soviet during crisis that goals were 1) get the Americans stuck in Taiwan; 2) promote conflict between Dulles & Chiang Kaishek; 3) “’to prove to the Americans that the People’s Republic of China is strong enough and bold enough and is not afraid of America’”; and, 4) to test the strength of American allies in the region[[5]](#footnote-5)**
* **Mao needed confrontation to support his domestic policies**
* **firm stance against US helped to assert independence from & equality to USSR**
* **US saw such provocations as a test of US resolve to defend free nations & their allies against communism**
* **US’s Two Chinas Policy**
* **no evidence US believed the incident would lead to tensions between USSR & PRC**

**Soviet Response & POV:**

* **in theory supported Mao**
* **upset not briefed about timing & methodology**
* **did offer air support—Mao turned them down**
* **furious over Mao’s inference that Soviets would use nuclear arsenal against US**
* **violation of rules of conduct inside communist sphere—tough discipline & hierarchy in military aspects of Cold War**
* **threatened confrontation between US & USSR—diametrically opposed to peaceful coexistence**
* **did not see Taiwan as simply a domestic issue of China—potential global impact of events, esp. USA**
* **saw Chinese as starting their own Cold War**
* **beginning of Soviet questioning of their support & advice in China’s development of atomic weapons**

**Khrushchev recalling a talk w/Mao a few weeks before crisis began, probably 1 Aug. 1958:**

**“’Once in Peking [Beijing], Mao and I were lying next to the swimming pool in our bathing trunks, discussing the problems of war and peace. Mao Tse-tung [Zedong] said to me, “Comrade Khrushchev, what do you think? If we compare the military might of the capitalist world with that of the Socialist world, you’ll see that we obviously have the advantage over our enemies. Think of how many divisions China, the USSR, and other Socialist countries could raise.”**

**‘I said, “Comrade Mao Tse-tung, nowadays that sort of thinking is out of date. You can no longer calculate the alignment of forces on the basis of who has the most men… now with the atomic bomb, the number of troops on each side males practically no difference to the alignment of real power and the outcome of war. The more troops on a side, the more bomb fodder…’”**

**‘Mao replied by trying to assure me that the atomic bomb itself was a paper tiger! “Listen Comrade Khrushchev... All you have to do is provoke the Americans into military action, and I’ll give you as many divisions as you need to crush them—a hundred, two hundred, one thousand divisions.” I tried to explain to him that one or two missiles could turn all of the divisions of China to dust.’**

**“’If there is an attack on the Soviet Union[Mao replied], I would recommend that you offer no resistance… Retreat for a year or two or three. Force your enemy to stretch out his lines of communications. That will weaken him. The, with our combined strength, we will go for the enemy together and smash him.’” [[6]](#footnote-6)**

**Soviet Atomic Assistance:**

* **Soviets began to reappraise their technical & scientific assistance to China’s nuclear program**
* **Mao’s aggressive & confrontational policy towards US counter to Soviet goals of peaceful cooperation & desire to avoid war with USA**
* **see Mao as betraying communist brotherhood**
* **could no longer trust Mao w/ atomic bomb**
* **20 Aug. 1959: USSR informed PRC that they would no longer provide any assistance to China’s development of an atomic weapon**
* **Khrushchev went to great lengths to hide the growing rift—would damage the communist effort**
* **after Khrushchev’s visit to US, Mao attacked him**
* **1st time Soviet blamed a communist ally for having poor relations with an evil imperialist power—USA**
* **serious of disagreements**
* **July 1960 all Soviet specialist withdrawn from China**
* **during 1961 Khrushchev quit paying lip service to alliance with China**

**1963: problems & issues between USSR & PRC were open & in public… the split was complete**

1. Jian, Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid, p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid, p. 70 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Vladislav Zubok and Constantin Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid, pp. 219-220. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)